United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1630
25 April 1994

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Under-Secretary-General Annan says air strikes will be launched against Bosnian Serbs if heavy weapons are not withdrawn from exclusion zone by Wednesday deadline; stresses agreement on issue between United Nations and NATO.

+ United Nations has not abandoned Rwandese civilians to ethnic violence despite scaling down of UNAMIR, Under-Secretary-General Annan says; Force Commander continues efforts to arrange cease-fire.

+ Secretary-General opens Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in Barbados.

+ Secretary-General expresses regret at death of former United States President Nixon, citing his impact in field of international relations.

+ India calls on Fifth Committee to urgently address issue of reimbursing States for troop contributions to UNTAC.

* * *

Air strikes will be launched against Bosnian Serb heavy weapons if they are not withdrawn from a 20-kilometre military exclusion zone around Gorazde by 0001 hours GMT on Wednesday, Kofi Annan, Under-Secretary-General for Peace-Keeping Operations, said today. A three-kilometre exclusion zone has been in effect since 0001 hours yesterday, following a decision of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on Friday. NATO authorized the use of air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs if they did not end their attacks against Gorazde, pull their forces back from the city centre, and allow United Nations forces freedom of movement there.

The Bosnian Serbs had not complied promptly with yesterday's deadline, but the Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), General Bertrand de Lapresle, had decided against the immediate use of air strikes, Mr. Annan told correspondents at Headquarters. UNPROFOR felt that progress was being made and that the Serbs would soon comply with the ultimatum; it was important to get United Nations troops and medical units into the city as

(more)

For information media--not an official record

quickly as possible and air strikes might have jeopardized that operation. There were now 475 United Nations personnel in Gorazde, he added.

Mr. Annan stressed that there was no disagreement between the United Nations and NATO over the issue of air strikes. The two organizations had enjoyed excellent relations for more than a year, and there were close contacts between Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Secretary-General Manfred Wörner and at the military level.

* * *

Rwandese civilians fleeing ethnic violence have not been abandoned despite the scaling down of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), Kofi Annan, Under-Secretary-General for Peace-Keeping Operations, said today. He told correspondents at Headquarters that some civilians who had sought shelter in UNAMIR facilities were now in areas protected by the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) and were reascnably safe, while others were being protected by United Nations observers still in the country. Meanwhile, the Force Commander had arranged an exchange of displaced persons in order to prevent massacres from taking place, and had held meetings with the Rwandese Government and the RPF in an attempt to arrange a cease-fire.

The Security Council last week adjusted UNAMIR's mandate so that it would act as an intermediary between the Rwandese parties in efforts to secure a cease-fire, assist in the resumption of humanitarian relief, and monitor developments in Rwanda. Mr. Annan stressed that UNAMIR had been a relatively small operation even before the Council action, and that its capabilities had been drastically reduced with the withdrawal of the Belgian contingent. He noted that the Mission was currently being scaled down towards its authorized strength of 270, with 450 personnel remaining in the country as of today.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said today that the issues before the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States were multifaceted, complex and vitally important. Addressing the opening of the two week Conference in Bridgetown, Barbados, he said the United Nations was commited to supporting development through such conferences, which encouraged cooperation and decision-making.

The Conference will aim to adopt a programme of action to preserve ecological balance and cultural diversity while fostering economic growth in small island developing States. Its draft programme of action addresses such issues as climate change and rising sea levels, preparedness for natural and environmental disasters, and resource management. The draft views tourism as a development opportunity that must be integrated with environmental and cultural concerns.

* * *

(more)

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today expressed regret at the death of Richard M. Nixon, former President of the United States. The Secretary-General said that he had known Mr. Nixon for many years, and that the former President had had an especially significant impact in the field of international relations. He extended his condolences to Mr. Nixon's family, as well as to the Government and people of the United States.

* * *

India today told the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) that it should urgently address the critical issue of reimbursing troop-contributing States that participated in the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). India said it had been reimbursed only up to March 1993 despite the mission's success, and noted that $90 million had been transferred from UNTAC to other peace-keeping operations.

United Nations Controller Yukio Takasu said that payment of the $97 million owed to such States would be expedited as soon as the Organization received some of the $254 million in outstanding contributions from Member States. He appealed to Members to pay their assessments as soon as possible.

* *** *